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The Influence of Gender Role Stereotypes, the Woman's Race, and Level of Provocation and Resistance on Domestic Violence Culpability Attributions[1]

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The influence of traditional or egalitarian gender role stereotypes on perceptions of domestic violence was investigated when the woman's race and her provocation of and resistance to domestic violence were varied. Two hundred eighty-eight European American participants who varied in their gender role stereotype beliefs provided culpability ratings. A factor analysis reduced culpability items to six concepts. Biases against the African American woman occurred, but not to the European American woman, particularly when she provoked the man. The woman's behavior before and after violence influenced participants' culpability notions, and beliefs in gender role stereotypes influenced perceptions of truthfulness based on race. Implications for the scope of educational programs to enhance support and eliminate biases are discussed.

KEY WORDS: domestic violence; African American women; gender role beliefs.

In the United States domestic violence has been acknowledged as a social issue since the early 1600s (Pleck, 1987). Colonial European Americans restricted domestic violence, because the sanctity of the family was part of their religious dogma. Thus, the Puritans developed the first domestic violence laws in what was to become the United States (Pleck, 1987). However, men could control their wives with violence in order to maintain familial authority (Hutchings, 1988). Public interference emerged *only* if behavior threatened the community. Later, English common law formed the United States' legal notions of appropriate domestic behavior, including the "rule of thumb," whereby social standards allowed wife beating with a stick no wider than the man's thumb (Crites, 1987). Significant legal attempts to restrict domestic violence did not occur until the 1970s with the women's movement and an increased interest in women's rights and well-being (Koss et al., 1994; Kurz, 1987; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999).

Domestic violence remains a serious concern (Rennison & Welchans, 2000). In a national survey 22% of women reported that they had experienced physical assault by a male intimate at some point in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a). Furthermore, 20% of emergency room visits by women are estimated to be the result of domestic violence (Kansas State Employees Heath Care Commission, 1989; Stark et al., 1981), and 52% of women who go to the emergency room will report physical abuse sometime in their life (American Bar Association, 1997).

Domestic violence is an important research focus and an area of theoretical interest (Browne, 1993; Goodman, Koss, Fitzgerald, Russo, & Keita, 1993). Research has focused on precursors of violence

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among men (Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, & Stuart, 2000; Huss, 2001), among women (Abel, 2001; Goodstein & Page, 1981), and the effects of domestic violence on those who experience it (Browne, 1993) and their family members (Berger, 2001; Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001; McIntosh, 2003; Trickett & Schellenbach, 1998).

Research on domestic violence culpability decisions provides insight into cultural biases concerning domestic violence actors and beliefs about the need for police and medical interventions (Avakame & Fyfe, 2001; Ferraro, 1989; Kurz, 1987), legal solutions (Ewing & Aubrey, 1987; Goldfarb, in press), and public policy (Fagan, 1996). Because it is assumed that legal attention to and restrictions on domestic violence modify the rates of such violence in society (Fagan, 1996; Harrison & Esqueda, 1999; Stewart & Maddren, 1997), the importance of understanding culpability decision making is an issue of some magnitude. In order to contribute to such an understanding, the present research was focused on culpability assignment by those who advocate traditional or egalitarian gender roles when the woman's race and her level of provocation and resistance are varied.

African American Women

In the past, in the United States African Americans had no legal rights, including no rights to domestic violence intervention (Sterling, 1984). Slave accounts indicate that domestic violence was a serious issue, but the law did not regulate violence within African American families or between owner and slave. Some would argue that there is still a lack of police intervention and societal concern about domestic abuse involving African Americans (Asbury, 1987; Edwards, 1989; Ferraro, 1989; Harrison & Esqueda, 1999; Willis, Hallinan, & Melby, 1996). Diversity among battered women has seldom been considered by theorists (Blackman, 1990), and there remains a dearth of research on ethnic minorities' domestic violence experience, either as victims or perpetrators. For example, police officers have been found to be *less* likely to intervene in domestic assault incidents involving minorities, despite the fact that officers are *more* likely to intervene in other types of violence and crime involving minorities in both the United States and the United Kingdom (Edwards, 1989; Ferraro, 1989; Tonry, 1994). Those factors (e.g., children present, substance abuse) that increase police involvement in domestic disturbances involving European American women are factors that predict less involvement for African American women, such that the latter are more vulnerable to repeated violence and injury (Robinson & Chandek, 2000).

Concurrently, the US Department of Justice Statistics indicates that minority women are at greatest risk from abuse by an intimate male partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a). Although methodology influences reported numbers, African American women appear to be at high risk for domestic assault (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2005; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a; West, 2002). Nevertheless, Ferraro (1989) found that officers were not responsive to minority women who had been abused and requested an arrest, even when the women had an obvious injury. Mandatory arrest laws were ignored, and officers' biases about abuse victims (e.g., living in housing projects, mutual violence, abuser absent, etc.) led to inaction. However, African American women appear to be supportive of efforts to prosecute their abusers (Weisz, 2002)—particularly if the physical abuse is ongoing and substance abuse is involved.

Lack of concern for African American women victims may stem from negative stereotypes of them (Donovan & Williams, 2002). During the nineteenth century, African American women were thought to be "... the inferior sex of an inferior race" (Sterling, 1984, p. ix). They were believed to fit roles such as Mammy, domestic servant, and prostitute. They were fit for toil and not much else. European American women were believed to be angelic, whereas African American women were believed to be the anti-thesis of this (Stephens, 1992). The African American matriarch myth grew from the stereotyped notion that Black women possessed features that made them strong, overbearing, and aggressive (Asbury, 1987; Briscoe, 2000; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Gillum, 2002). They were thought to require no responsibility from African American men and were thought to emasculate them (Asbury, 1987). Thus, African American women were perceived as responsible for their own inferior status, as well as that of their male counterparts.

Gillum (2002) found that African American men endorse stereotypes that are consistent with the African American matriarch and with the African American Jezebel who is sexually promiscuous and immoral. Beliefs in the latter stereotype were significantly associated with increased beliefs in justifications for violence. European American college

students endorsed the belief that African American women were loud, talkative, aggressive, intelligent, argumentative, and straightforward, and that they held more negative traits, than American women in general (Weitz & Gordon, 1993). Niemann, Jennings, Rozelle, Baxter, and Sullivan (1994) found similar results—African American women were considered loud, antagonistic, and unmannerly, but friendly, athletic, and socially active. Thus, reliance on negative stereotypes about African American women by police, prosecutors, and judges may thwart the equitable processing of domestic violence cases.

Indeed, prosecutors and defense attorneys act on the stereotype of the typical battered woman as one who has experienced severe physical abuse, but responded passively to it (Jenkins & Davidson, 1990; Schwartz, 1989). Women abuse victims are viewed as helpless, vulnerable, ashamed, weak, passive, dependent, unassertive, depressed, defenseless, and predominantly European American (Esqueda, 2003; Harrison & Esqueda, 1999). They must "... be polite, have no discrediting attributes, and feel that some unfortunate event has happened to them" (Kurz, 1987, p. 73). African American women, then, do not fit the stereotype of the typical domestic abuse victim (Edwards, 1989). Thus, they may be blamed more for their abuse (Harrison & Willis, 1996), not perceived as victims (Willis et al., 1996), derogated more, and seen as having fewer positive traits than European American women do (Murray & Stahly, 1987). Thus, we hypothesized that ratings of African American women's complicity in and culpability for domestic violence would be higher, than ratings for European American women.

Overwhelmingly, it is women who are victims in domestic violence (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). Women are more likely than men to be injured in such assaults (Rand & Saltzman, 2003; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a; West, 2002), and injuries that are inflicted on women by men in domestic violence are costly for women (Barnett et al., 2005), for their children (Margolin & Gordis, 2004), and for society at large (West, 2002). Nevertheless, part of the abuse victim stereotype is passivity (Schwartz, 1989), and the use of violence by women in domestic confrontations is a controversial topic (Barnett et al., 2005; Browne, 1993; Kimmel, 2002; Melton & Belknap, 2003; West, 2002). Some have argued that mutual battering is more frequent than commonly believed (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b). It has been noted that women are "... neither innocent victims nor sole precipitators of violent episodes; rather, they are unwitting collaborators with their mates in the episodes" (Goodstein & Page, 1981, p. 1038). Some research has been predicated on the assumption that both men and women participate in and commit domestic assaults (Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987), and findings indicate that women do engage in abusive acts (Rouse, Breen, & Howell, 1988). Although we believe that women are the victims of violence more frequently than men are for a variety of reasons (see Kimmel, 2002), we were interested in the effects of a woman's provocation and resistance on culpability assignment for African American and European American couples in a domestic violence, as we believe that differences are due to historical and current stereotypes.

Provocation

The notion of victim participation in abuse has a long history, and some have argued that women abuse victims can be labeled "tormentors" who provoke men to violence (Rasche, 1990). One stereotype about domestic violence is that women provoke men to assault (Koss et al., 1994), and this notion was prevalent in legal interventions in the twentieth century (Goldfarb, in press). There is a dearth of research, however, on culpability assignment with provocation in domestic violence, although such assignment has important ramifications for arrest and prosecution. Ewing and Aubrey (1987) reported that almost 40% of a community sample of respondents believed that women are partially responsible for their abuse. Cook, Fisher, and Shirkey (1991) found that over 30% of a community sample of respondents believed that a wife's yelling is never acceptable behavior, and over 60% believed that it is never acceptable for her to slam a door on her husband. Some police officers believe that a woman is more responsible for abuse when she has shown "verbal antagonism" (Lavoie, Jacob, Hardy, & Martin 1989). It has also been found that higher blame and derogation are assigned to women who use verbal provocation prior to abuse (Kristiansen & Giulietti, 1990; Pierce & Harris, 1993). Women's provocation in domestic violence may lessen perceptions of the seriousness of women's injuries and hinder efforts to create effective public policy (Hatty, 1987). Regardless of participants' gender, victims who provoke domestic violence are thought to be more responsible and are liked less,

whereas the batterer is thought to be less responsible in some circumstances (Harris & Cook, 1994). Provocation may produce higher culpability ratings for women—particularly for African American women. Part of the stereotype of African American women is their proclivity to be confrontational and antagonistic. Consequently, we hypothesized that African American women would be held more culpable for domestic violence outcomes when provocation had occurred.

Resistance

It has been argued that retaliation or self-defense actions and anger by women are unacceptable, according to the "battered woman as passive" stereotype (Jenkins & Davidson, 1990). Officers have been shown to be less likely to intervene in domestic abuse if the situation can be construed as "mutual combat" (Ferraro, 1989). In fact, Schwartz (1989) argued that "... we know that women are as violent as men, that sexism is not the cause of family violence, and that, even when men are the only ones to be violent, women are still partially to blame" (p. 47). Other researchers have characterized a type of "aggressive response," when a woman retaliates against the batterer (Goodstein & Page, 1981). Whether couples are dating or married, mutual violence is not an uncommon occurrence (Busch & Rosenberg, 2004; Domestic Disturbance, 1997; Rouse et al., 1988). Both men and women are thought to be more justified in using retaliatory violence if they have not instigated the confrontation (Cook & Harris, 1995). However, women who use aggression to counter assaults are judged more harshly than those women who do not (Branscombe & Weir, 1992). When the woman retaliates, the man's guilt is seen as lower, there is less necessity for criminal charges, and the abuse incident is viewed as more serious and more violent (Willis & Pierce, 1992). Thus, African American women may be thought more culpable for domestic violence, than European American women when retaliation occurs because this behavior is consistent with the stereotype of African American women, yet inconsistent with the stereotype of the battered woman. This may be especially true when provocation is present, yet no researchers have investigated these combined effects. Perhaps the combination of provocation and retaliation would enhance culpability attributions for the African American woman (and lessen those for the man, regardless of race). Certainly, provocation and resistance are both behaviors that are consistent with the negative stereotype of African American women.

Gender Role Stereotypes

Perceptions of those who engage in domestic violence are influenced by adherence to gender role stereotypes. Differences in gender role stereotyping produce different culpability assignments for violence against women in general (Billingham & King, 1991; Saunders, Lynch, Grayson, & Linz, 1987; Willis, 1992; Willis et al., 1996). For example, those espousing traditional gender role stereotypes demonstrate biased notions against date rape victims (Willis, 1992). Traditionalists attribute greater blame to the victim and less blame to the perpetrator, than egalitarians do. Moreover, traditional gender role ideology has been found to influence police response to domestic abuse (Homant & Kennedy, 1985; Saunders & Size, 1986), such that police officers with a traditional ideology are more likely to blame the victim and less likely to express professional concern about domestic violence. In other studies, traditionalists have recommended a shorter jail sentence and believed that the incident was less abusive when the woman was African American than when she was European American (Willis et al., 1996). Moreover, police are less likely to respond to domestic abuse situations when the victim is African American (Edwards, 1989; Ferraro, 1989).

The Present Study

The Traditional/Egalitarian Sex Role Inventory (TESR) measures individuals' beliefs in traditional gender role stereotypes versus more egalitarian ones (Larsen & Long, 1988). In the current study, the TESR was administered to gather information on participants' belief in gender role stereotypes and to determine its influence on domestic violence culpability assignment. Those who adhere to traditional gender role stereotypes were expected to perceive the incident as less serious and the woman as more culpable when she was African American rather than European American. In addition, adherence to gender role stereotypes was expected to interact with race, provocation, and resistance. Those with a traditional ideology were expected

to hold an African American woman who shows provocation and resistance to domestic violence more culpable for the abuse than they would an European American woman under the same circumstances. Battered women who show no provocation and do not fight back are consistent with the traditional gender role stereotype, but the traditional gender role stereotype is inconsistent with the stereotype of the African American woman. In contrast, those who are egalitarian were expected to acknowledge the abuse no matter what the woman's behavior and to show fewer biases in assigning culpability.

METHOD

Participants

Three-hundred and three volunteers from a large university in the Great Plains participated for partial credit in introductory psychology courses.[5] Nine ethnic minority students participated, and their responses were excluded from analyses because of the small sample size. In addition, six participants failed to follow instructions in completion of the dependent measures questionnaire and/or incorrectly identified the victim's race, level of provocation, or level of resistance and these were excluded from analyses. Therefore, 288 European American participants were included in the analyses (138 women and 150 men; age $M = 20.40$ years).

Participants were randomly assigned to the 2 (couples' race: African American or European American[6]) $\times$ 3 (level of resistance: none, hitting the man, or stabbing with a knife) $\times$ 2 (level of provocation: none or hitting the man with her hand prior to the attack) between-participants design, and all conditions were represented within each experimental session. None of the participants declined to participate in the study.

[5]The use of university students as participants was appropriate given that domestic abuse is believed to be prevalent in this age group (Hamberger & Arnold, 1989; Koss et al., 1994; Makepeace, 1986) and members of this group are now and will be future litigators, law enforcement actors, and public policy makers.

[6]The couple's race was not varied in this study (i.e., no interracial couples) because although out-marriage has increased since the 1960s, same race couples and marriages are still the norm (McLemore, Romo, & Gonzalez Baker, 2001).

Materials

Police Interview Transcript

A police interview transcript contained information that varied the couple's race, the level of the woman's provocation, and the level of the woman's response. In the transcript, two police officers responded to an anonymous telephone call reporting the occurrence of a domestic dispute, which appeared to have ended upon their arrival. Police conducted separate interviews with the alleged victim and the alleged batterer. The interviews began with the victim's version and included descriptions of the couple's race. Both the victim and batterer described the domestic violence incident, and each described the batterer's actions as well as the victim's level of provocation and resistance during the incident. The victim's and batterer's descriptions of the incident were equivalent in length and content. As jealousy is a leading cause of domestic violence globally (Levinson, 1989; Rouse et al., 1988; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987; Wilson & Daly, 1996), the scenario involved a jealous rage by the husband and a denial of flirtation by the wife. The couple had had a small party, and an old high-school friend of the wife had attended. After the party, the husband accused the wife of being overly attentive to the high-school friend and of flirting with him. In the provocation condition, she screamed obscenities at the husband and slapped him, prior to being punched with a fist by the husband. In the no provocation condition, the wife said nothing except that the accusations were untrue and she did not slap him. In the resistance conditions, the wife retaliated either by punching the husband back or by grabbing a kitchen knife and stabbing him in the arm. In the no resistance condition, the wife did nothing to retaliate. Except for the manipulated variables, all aspects were held constant in the transcript.

Trial Questionnaire

The questionnaire items were designed to assess perceptions concerning the behavior and culpability of both actors in a domestic violence situation, including perceptions of customary violence between the couple, perceptions of the incident's seriousness, and perceptions of culpability. Participants indicated their response to all items on a 7-point rating scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) for each measure. The items are displayed in Table I.

Table I. Dependent Measure Items

1.	How serious was this situation?
2.	How violent was this incident?
3.	How responsible was the woman?
4.	How responsible was the man?
5.	How truthful was the woman about the incident?
6.	How truthful was the man about the incident?
7.	To what degree did the woman provoke the man's response?
8.	If you had been a neighbor in this situation, how likely would it be that you would have called the police?
9.	How likely is it that this woman has been involved in this type of situation before?
10.	If the man hit or stabbed the woman, was he justified in doing so?
11.	If the woman hit or stabbed the man, was she justified in doing so?
12.	Would a law requiring a mandatory arrest of the man be justified for this type of incident?
13.	If the man was injured in this situation, how serious was his injury?
14.	If the woman was injured in this situation, how serious was her injury?
15.	Was the man guilty of abuse?
16.	Is it likely that in the future this man would become more violent with this woman?
17.	Did the woman have the right to use physical force to defend herself in this situation?
18.	Would the woman's use of physical force to defend herself in this situation increase the likelihood of a similar incident occurring with this man in the future?
19.	Did the man have the right to use physical force to defend himself?
20.	Was the man to blame for the incident?
21.	Was the woman to blame for the incident?
22.	If this man was tried and convicted for assault and you were on the jury, what length of sentence would you recommend (in years only)? _____

Manipulation Checks

After completion of the ratings, participants were asked to provide responses to open-ended questions about their knowledge of the actors' race, provocation, resistance, and who was injured in the incident. The responses were then compared to the conditions presented in the transcript the participants had seen. As stated previously, only six participants failed manipulation checks and were excluded from analyses.

Traditional and Egalitarian Sex Role Inventory

The TESR (Larsen & Long, 1988) is a 20-item assessment of the degree to which one adheres to traditional gender role stereotypes. The TESR contains items such as "It is just as important to educate daughters as it is to education sons," "Ultimately, a woman should submit to her husband's decision," and "Men who cry have weak character." Items were rated on a 7-point rating scale (1 = *agree strongly* to 7 = *disagree strongly*), and scores can range from 20 to 140. Higher scores indicated a more egalitarian orientation toward gender roles. Larsen and Long (1988) reported the split half reliability was .85 ($p > .001$) and a reliability of .91 ($p < .001$) with a Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. A test of concurrent validity produced a correlation of .79 ($p > .001$) between the TESR and the traditional thinking measured in the Brogan and Kutner (1976) scale. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha was .88 ($p < .001$).

In the current study the TESR was interspersed in a bogus "social attitudes" questionnaire that contained 48 items and included a variety of items for current social issues (e.g., smoking behavior, immigrant issues, and taxes). The TESR was interspersed with bogus items, in order to minimize completion based on social desirability.

Procedure

Upon arrival for each session, participants were informed that the research involved perceptions of criminal behavior. Subsequently, they were provided a transcript of a police officer interviewing actors in a domestic violence incident. Participants were led to believe that various types of criminal incidents were being examined. In actuality, all participants read about a domestic violence incident. The manipulations of the couple's race, level of provocation (none or yells obscenities), and level of resistance (none, hits, or stabs the man) were contained in the transcripts. After reading the transcripts, participants completed the ratings questionnaire. They then were asked to help us with the validation of a newly developed "social attitudes" questionnaire, which contained the TESR. After completion of the attitudes questionnaire they were debriefed about the true nature of the study.

RESULTS

A factor analysis was conducted on the dependent variables, and a principal components analysis with varimax rotation yielded six factors

Table II. Factor Loadings for Dependent Variables

	Factors					
	General seriousness	Woman's culpability	Woman's pattern	General truthfulness	General justification	Man's right
Item 1	0.78	0.1	−0.04	0.12	−0.18	−0.00
Item 2	0.82	−0.38	0.11	0.07	−0.03	−0.03
Item 3	0.05	0.73	0.11	0.14	0.06	0.13
Item 5	0.14	−0.19	0.07	0.78	−0.05	0.03
Item 6	0.04	0.12	−0.08	0.84	0.11	−0.12
Item 7	−0.17	0.76	0.03	0.00	−0.06	0.10
Item 8	0.57	−0.15	0.20	0.01	−0.01	−0.07
Item 9	0.07	0.09	0.67	0.06	0.05	0.02
Item 10	−0.12	0.27	−0.10	−0.03	0.78	−0.02
Item 11	0.05	−0.33	0.17	0.14	0.75	0.15
Item 13	0.61	0.07	−0.17	−0.09	0.19	0.37
Item 14	0.56	−0.02	0.24	0.09	−0.00	−0.15
Item 16	−0.17	0.25	0.71	0.05	−0.21	0.07
Item 17	0.05	−0.53	0.21	0.09	−0.22	0.43
Item 18	0.03	0.16	0.61	−0.18	0.15	−0.20
Item 19	0.19	−0.12	−0.08	0.00	0.11	0.81
Item 20	0.15	−0.60	0.38	0.11	−0.13	0.06
Item 21	−0.04	0.69	0.20	−0.16	−0.08	0.05

Note. Items 4 (man's responsibility), 12 (mandatory arrest law), 15 (man's perceived guilt), and 22 (man's response only with this woman) failed to load on any factor and were analyzed separately.

with eigenvalues over 1.00, which accounted for 55% of the variance (see the measures in Table I). An additional sentence measure was analyzed separately, as sentencing was measured in years rather than a 7-point rating scale. Furthermore, questions that referred to the man's responsibility, appropriateness of mandatory arrest, and the man's guilt loaded on none of the factors and were analyzed separately. A revised factor analysis using varimax rotation was performed that accounted for 60% of the variance. The dependent variables that composed the factors and their factor loadings (0.50 or above) are shown in Table II. As can be seen from the table, the factors that emerged were General Seriousness (Factor 1), the Woman's Culpability (Factor 2), the Woman's Pattern of Domestic Violence (Factor 3), Overall Justification For Physical Force (Factor 4), General Truthfulness (Factor 5), and the Man's Right to Use Physical Force to Defend Himself (Factor 6), which loaded by itself. A regression method was used to save the factors as dependent variables.

In the present sample, the range of TESR scores were 44–140. Two groups were identified with a median split (Mdn = 120). Those scored as high (M = 130.08) reported more egalitarian beliefs than did those who scored low ($M = 101.15$), who were more traditional, $F(1, 286) = 408.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = 0.59$.

General Seriousness

For perceptions of general seriousness, there was a three-way interaction for the woman's provocation, resistance, and traditional/egalitarian beliefs, $F(2, 264) = 4.74$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.04$. Student Newman Kuhl's post hoc examinations of the factor scores were used throughout these analyses, as well as partial eta squared as a measure of effect size. As seen in Table III, a post hoc examination indicated those with traditional beliefs tended to perceive the incident as more serious in general if the woman had resisted by stabbing the man, than was the case in other conditions, $F(5, 137) = 7.76$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.22$. A post hoc examination indicated those with

Table III. Factor Scores for General Seriousness as Function of Traditional/Egalitarian Gender Role Beliefs, Resistance Level, and Provocation Level

	Resistance level		
Provocation level	None	Hit	Stab
Traditional			
None	−.47 a	−.07 ab	.24 bc
Hit	−.58 a	−.69 a	.65 c
Egalitarian			
None	.52 bc	−.22 a	.65 c
Hit	−.13 a	−.12 ab	.28 abc

Note. Values with different letters are statistically at the .05 level.

egalitarian beliefs tended to see the incident as more serious in general than did those with traditional beliefs, but particularly where there was no provocation and where the woman stabbed the man, $F(5, 139) = 4.30$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.13$.

Woman's Culpability

There were several main effects that influenced the woman's perceived culpability for domestic violence. The woman's race, $F(1, 264) = 4.93$, $p < .03$, $\eta_p = 0.02$, the level of provocation, $F(1, 264) = 29.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = 0.10$, the level of resistance, $F(2, 264) = 6.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = 0.05$, and traditional or egalitarian beliefs, $F(1, 264) = 9.71$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.04$, all influenced the woman's perceived culpability. The African American woman (factor score = .14) was perceived as more culpable, than the European American woman (factor score = −.14), and the woman who provoked the man (factor score = .32) was perceived as more culpable than the woman who did not (factor score = −.32). Those with traditional gender role beliefs (factor score = .19) believed the woman to be more culpable, than did those with egalitarian gender role beliefs (factor score = −.18). In terms of level of resistance, the woman who did nothing in retaliation (factor score = .22) or who stabbed the man (factor score = .05) was thought to be more culpable for the incident than was the woman who hit the man in retaliation (factor score = −.26), $F(2, 285) = 5.98$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.05$.

Woman's Pattern of Abuse

There was a marginal effect for level of provocation on the woman's pattern in abusive relationships, $F(1, 264) = 3.23$, $p < .07$. Those who did nothing to provoke the man (factor score = .10) were seen as more likely to have repeat incidents, than those who had provoked the man by hitting him (factor score = −.10).

General Truthfulness

There was a significant interaction between the woman's race and participants' egalitarian/traditional beliefs on perceived general truthfulness, $F(1, 264) = 6.57$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.02$. As shown in Table IV, traditionalists believed the African American couple to be less truthful, whereas egalitarians believed the African American couple to be the more truthful about the incident, $F(3, 284) = 3.31$, $p < .02$, $\eta_p = 0.03$.

Table IV. Factor Scores for General Truthfulness as a Function of Woman's Race and Traditional/Egalitarian Gender Role Beliefs

	African American	European American
Egalitarian	.32 b	−.10 ab
Traditional	−.17 a	−.00 ab

Note. Values with different letters are statistically at the .05 level.

General Justification

As shown in Table V, there was a significant interaction effect between the woman's race and level of provocation on the perceived justification for violence, $F(1, 264) = 7.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = 0.03$, which indicated that justification was thought to be higher when the African American woman had provoked the man (.30) than when the European American woman had done so (−.25), $F(3, 284) = 4.09$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.04$. In the no provocation condition no differences emerged based on the woman's race (African American woman factor score = −.08, European American woman factor score = .04). There was a significant 3-way interaction effect between the level of provocation, level of resistance, and participants' traditional and egalitarian beliefs on perceived justification, $F(2, 264) = 4.49$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.03$. Those with traditional beliefs thought that justification was highest when there had been provocation, but no resistance, $F(5, 137) = 4.68$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.14$. Those with egalitarian beliefs thought that justification was highest when there was resistance with stabbing, but no provocation, $F(5, 139) = 3.12$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p = 0.10$.

Table V. Factor Scores for General Justification as a Function of Traditional/Egalitarian Gender Role Beliefs, Resistance Level, and Provocation Level

	Resistance level		
Provocation level	None	Hit	Stab
Traditional			
None	−.30 ab	.09 abc	.41 bc
Hit	.57 a	−.52 c	.43 bc
Egalitarian			
None	−.44 ab	−.20 bc	.30 c
Hit	−.37 bc	.10 bc	.21 bc

Note. Values with different letters are statistically at the .05 level.

Man's Right to Defend Himself

There was a main effect of the woman's resistance level on the man's right to defend himself, $F(2, 264) = 21.83, p < .001, \eta_p = 0.14$. When the woman stabbed the man, his right to defend himself was seen as higher (Factor Score = 0.53) than when she hit him (Factor Score = −0.21) or than when she was passive (Factor Score = −0.31), $F(2, 285) = 22.85, p < .01, \eta_p = 0.14$.

Man's Responsibility

There were no significant effects on the man's responsibility ratings; however, there was a marginal effect for the man who was stabbed to receive a lower responsibility rating ($M = 4.59$) than the man who was hit ($M = 5.20$) or where there was no resistance was given ($M = 5.13$), $p = .06$.

Mandatory Arrest

When the woman provoked the man, mandatory arrest was seen as less justified ($M = 3.78$) than when there was no provocation ($M = 4.84$), $F(1, 264) = 24.44, p < .001, \eta_p = 0.09$. Moreover, those with egalitarian gender role beliefs viewed mandatory arrest as more justified ($M = 4.48$) than did those with traditional beliefs ($M = 4.13$), $F(1, 264) = 4.42, p < .04, \eta_p = 0.02$.

Guilt

Those with egalitarian beliefs gave higher guilt ratings to the man ($M = 6.33$) than did those with traditional beliefs ($M = 5.84$), $F(1, 264) = 12.58, p < .001, \eta_p = 0.05$. Also, as shown in Table VI, there was a significant three-way interaction between the woman's race, the level of provocation, and the level of resistance, $F(2, 264) = 3.03, p < .05, \eta_p = .02$. Post hoc analyses for the African American couple showed the man's guilt rating was lower when there was provocation but no resistance ($M = 5.38$) than when there was no provocation and no resistance ($M = 6.48$) or when there was no provocation and resistance by stabbing ($M = 6.48$), $F(5, 137) = 3.16, p < .01, \eta_p = 0.10$. In other words, the African American man was thought to be guiltier when the African American woman did nothing or when she had retaliated by stabbing him. There were no differences in guilt ratings when the woman was European American.

Table VI. Means for Perceived Guilt as a Function of the Woman's Race, Resistance Level, and Provocation Level

	Resistance level		
Provocation level	None	Hit	Stab
African American			
None	6.48 bc	6.28 abc	6.48 bc
Hit	5.38 a	5.79 ab	5.67 ab
European American			
None	6.48	6.56	6.04
Hit	5.92	5.65	6.39

Note. A post hoc analysis of the ratings for the European American woman yielded no significant differences between means. Values with different letters are statistically at the .05 level.

Sentence

Traditional and egalitarian beliefs significantly affected the recommended jail sentence for the man, $F(1, 264) = 4.58, p < .03, \eta_p = 0.02$. Egalitarians recommended a longer sentence ($M = 1.50$ years) than did those who were traditionalists ($M = 1.15$ years). However, no other effects were found.

DISCUSSION

Racism *and* sexism leave African American women with different psychological and legal experiences than men and other women (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990; Smith & Stewart, 1983; Thomas, 2004). These differences demand innovative and culturally appropriate educational and legal remedies to end domestic violence. The findings reported here expand our knowledge of the effects of the woman's race and her provocation of and resistance to domestic violence on culpability decisions, particularly by those who hold traditional beliefs about gender roles.

The present sample believed that the African American woman was more culpable in general than the European American woman.[7] We predicted a general negative bias against the African American woman, and the results confirmed our hypotheses. The bias against African American women in a domestic violence context confirms the historical and

[7]One limitation of this research is that the participant sample may have less direct contact with minority group members than in other regions of the United States. However, ethnic bias has been found across the United States and some of the stereotype findings reported here were obtained in other regions with a large minority population.

current lack of national alarm concerning violence in African American women's lives, despite 30 years of public education and programming focused on domestic violence.

Moreover, there was support for our notion that gender role beliefs influence perceptions based on the woman's race. Those with traditional beliefs perceived the European American couple to be more truthful, but those with egalitarian beliefs found the African American couple more truthful concerning the incident. This finding may indicate that egalitarian gender role beliefs also coincide with more liberal notions concerning race issues in general (Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996). At least in the past, gender role stereotyping has been found to correlate with prejudice against African Americans (Hoover & Fishbein, 1999).

The African American woman's provocation influenced the perceived justifications for violence. The general justification for violence was higher when an African American woman had provoked an African American man than it was when a European American woman had provoked a European American man. Given that much of the legal interventions in the twentieth century were based on identifying and changing women's provocative behaviors (Goldfarb, in press), rather than on deterring abusers, African American women may be singled out for less intervention, which leaves them at high risk for further assault.

In addition, the man's guilt ratings were influenced by the woman's race and her level of provocation. When the woman was African American, the African American man's guilt ratings were lower when there was only provocation and no resistance, than when there was no violence at all by the woman or when there was no provocation and but there was resistance by stabbing. When the woman was European American there were no differences among conditions. Thus, biases against the African American woman were found, but such biases did not appear to be affected by the African American woman's level of resistance. Contrary to our hypotheses concerning African American women and resistance, the bias focused on general culpability and use of provocation. Perhaps, the negative stereotype of African American women as aggressive is most influential when she is confirming the stereotype with provocation. One common stereotype is that African American women will take aggressive action against their mates when they are "pushed too far" (Staples, 1999, p. 261). Our findings demonstrate the outcome of such a stereotype, and highlight the need for additional research concerning what behaviors by African American women are thought to be provocative. Is the range of behaviors perceived to be provocative for African American women the same as for other groups of women? Or, is it different in some way?

Regardless of race, we found that provocation by the woman decreased participants' belief that mandatory arrest was needed. In addition, no resistance or serious resistance (i.e., stabbing) by the woman increased general culpability ratings for the woman. Serious resistance with stabbing resulted in a higher rating for the man's right to defend himself than was the case when there was resistance with hitting or no resistance. However, the effects of provocation and resistance were also influenced by gender beliefs. Those with traditional beliefs viewed the incident as most serious when resistance by stabbing occurred, whereas those with egalitarian beliefs thought that the most serious incident was with violence solely from the man or violence from the man *and* serious resistance (i.e., stabbing) from the woman. In terms of justified violence, those with traditional beliefs thought the violence was justified when there was provocation alone. However, those with egalitarian beliefs believed that the violence was justified when there was no provocation but there was serious resistance by the woman (i.e., stabbing).

Consequently, differences in gender role beliefs influenced perceptions of domestic violence. Those with traditional notions rated mandatory arrests as less justified, guilt as lower, and sentences as shorter than did those with egalitarian beliefs. However, gender beliefs also influenced generalized notions of culpability in combination with the level of provocation and resistance shown by the woman. Taken together, results indicated that those with traditional beliefs about gender roles have a different notion of what constitutes domestic violence than do those with egalitarian beliefs. Traditional beliefs appear to contain or predict a more conservative notion of what actions constitute violence. Thus, educational programs have not eliminated biased assessments of domestic violence actors—particularly for those who hold traditional gender role beliefs.

Future programs should target those with traditional gender role beliefs in order to dispel the constricted notion of how domestic violence is acted out. Certainly, judges, attorneys, law enforcement personnel, case workers, and a myriad of other actors involved with intervention in and disposition of

domestic violence cases should be aware of the biases that can accompany traditional gender role beliefs. There are indications that police with traditional gender role ideologies are more likely to blame victims and to show less concern for them (Homant & Kennedy, 1985; Saunders & Size, 1986). At the same time, police have shown support for domestic violence education programs (Buzawa, 1982), such training results in more positive attitudes concerning police intervention (Buchanan & Perry, 1985), and such intervention results in less homelessness for women following abuse (Baker, Cook, & Norris, 2003).

Judges' traditional notions of women's roles and domestic abuse can result in misguided case disposition (Crites, 1987; Hartman & Belknap, 2003). The American Bar Association made recommendations to law schools to incorporate information on domestic violence to their law school curricula (American Bar Association, 2003) in order to educate future attorneys and judges about its prevalence, etiology, and scope. Some law schools routinely offer courses in domestic violence (Goldfarb, in press). However, ethnic and racial differences in prevalence or legal outcomes of domestic violence, or the biasing influence of traditional gender role beliefs, are not issues often reviewed within the typical curriculum. As demonstrated here, African American women's complaints may not be considered as seriously as European American women's complaints by legal actors (e.g., police, prosecutors, judges, juries). This finding may have implications for legal outcomes, given that most police, attorneys and judges are European American men (American Bar Association, 1998; Reaves & Hickman, 2004), and European American men are likely to hold traditional gender role ideologies (Hoover & Fishbein, 1999). Moreover, police are less likely to intervene directly with arrest for male abusers, and they are more likely to make arrests if the victim is European American (Avakame & Fyfe, 2001).

The lack of intervention and continued high risk for African American women means that their children are subject to exposure to domestic violence. Such exposure has been found to have deleterious effects on children's attitudes toward and expressions of violence (Margolin & Gordis, 2004; Osofsky, 2004). Moreover, police are less likely to make arrests during domestic calls involving African American women when children are present (Robinson & Chandek, 2000), which leaves women with less protection and children more likely to have repeated exposures to violence. Consequently, such violence is more likely to become intergenerational (Doumas, Margolin, & John, 1994) and promote a continued high risk for African Americans into the future.

In addition, the lack of educational programs to dispel negative stereotypes of African Americans leaves open the possibility that African American women may incorporate negative self images (e.g., strong, domineering, and tough) and, consequently, believe that they can handle the violence by themselves (Taylor, 2002). Such social isolation does not facilitate perceived or actual social support. Social support systems have played and continue to play a significant role in the maintenance of mental health and well-being for African American women, particularly when extended family presence is absent. For African American women, social support lessens the chances of domestic violence and the consequential suffering (Thompson et al., 2000), and social support has been shown to mitigate re-victimization for African American women as well (Bender, Cook, & Kaslow, 2003).

At the same time, the states with the highest number of African Americans have the fewest number of domestic violence shelters (Coley & Beckett, 1988), which could facilitate social support networks. In order for African American women to alter their violent domestic situations, adequate numbers of culturally appropriate shelters must be available (Asbury, 1987). Based on our findings, biases against African American women, especially against those who are perceived to have provoked men, may preclude policy makers from advocating for public funds to develop additional, culturally appropriate shelters. Consequently, extended family becomes more important than social services as social buffers (Asbury, 1987; Miller, 2003). Although family generated social support has positive benefits, African American families can become overburdened. Indeed, assistance for African American women may be hampered by limited resources within the family and a lack of legal knowledge (Miller, 2003).

We advocate that national programs highlight education that can lead to culturally appropriate responses to domestic violence for African American women, as well as other Women of Color. Such education would benefit all actors within the legal system and serve to dispel stereotypes of African American women that generate biases such as those found in the present research. We also advocate the development of shelters in African American communities with African American and/or

culturally sensitive caseworkers. Given that African American women involved in domestic violence have been found to be highly ethnically identified (Swan, Gambone, & Fields, 2005), locally administered shelters can provide the social support that extended families and networks may not be able to provide and generate the emotional and physical support necessary to ensure a safe and healing environment.

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